

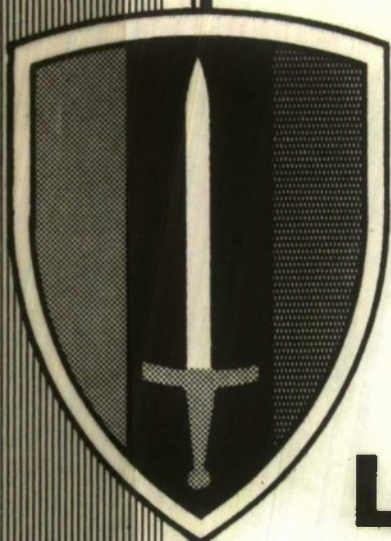
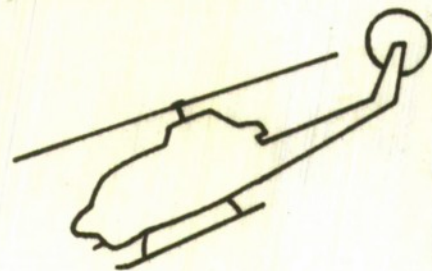
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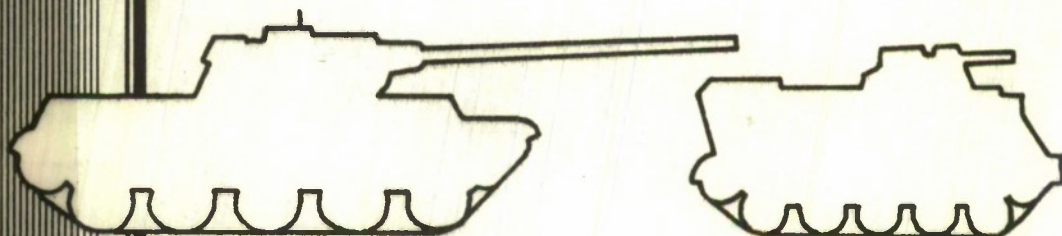
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1968 (Jan)

**UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM**



# **A SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED**



PREPARED BY

HEADQUARTERS, US ARMY VIETNAM

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IN REPLY REFER TO  
AVHGC-DST

18 January 1968

SUBJECT: A Summary of Lessons Learned

TO: See Distribution


1. This pamphlet presents a compilation of the major significant lessons learned as reported in the Operational Reports-Lessons Learned of the major units under the command of this headquarters. Related in this document are incidents and problems described by the commanders who actually experienced them. Each reader should analyze the situation presented, draw his own conclusions, and apply the lessons derived to his own particular unit or operation.

2. There are a number of items described herein which are not new or even unique to the conflict in Vietnam. In many cases, these examples serve only to remind the reader that many basic fundamentals are being overlooked in both the preparation for and conduct of combat and support operations.

3. The data contained in this pamphlet are not to be construed as doctrine, but as the latest information from the soldier in the field as he explains the changes and improvements in standard techniques which are required to operate effectively in the environment of Vietnam. By sharing the benefits of recent experience we can better defeat the enemy we face in our quest for stability in this war-torn land.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl  
as

  
D. E. TUMAN  
Major, AGC  
Asst Adjutant General

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Prepared by  
HEADQUARTERS, US ARMY VIETNAM

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## CONTENTS

### PREFACE

### SECTION - I

#### COMBAT OPERATIONS

General Observations.....	1
The Enemy.....	3
Intelligence.....	7
Planning.....	9
Command and Control.....	11
Combat Techniques.....	12
Police Operations.....	15
Training.....	16

### SECTION - II

#### COMBAT SUPPORT OPERATIONS

General Observations.....	19
Army Aviation.....	20
Artillery Support.....	22
Engineer Support.....	25

### SECTION - III

#### COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Medical Service.....	27
Logistics.....	29
General Observations.....	29
Construction.....	32
Maintenance.....	35
Supply.....	38
Signal Communications.....	40

### SECTION - IV

#### GENERAL

Base Camps.....	43
Training.....	44
Civil Affairs/Civic Actions.....	47
Personnel and Administration.....	50
Military Police Operations.....	52



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## Section I

### A SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED IN COMBAT OPERATIONS

#### 1. General Observations.

##### a. Scout Vehicles (M113).

"Item: The majority of casualties from the scout vehicle crews are observers.

Discussion: The scout vehicle commander is protected by a prefabricated gun shield while the observer has no protection.

Observation: The gun shield for the track commander is effective in protecting him from enemy fire. The use of sandbags or an armor plate shield will reduce the casualty rate among the observer personnel."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

##### b. Locating Troops.

"Item: Aerial location of friendly troops through a thick forest canopy.

Discussion: It is often impossible to visually identify friendly unit locations in heavily forested areas. Smoke grenades are also difficult to see. The most effective method found has been the use of hand flares and/or firing Very pistol flares using the M79. By firing a hand flare or Very pistol flare from each flank of the element, the area occupied can be readily identified from the air.

Observation: This procedure assists the air observer and FAC in adjustment of close-in artillery fires and close air strikes."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

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## c. Marking Smoke.

"Item: Field expedient smoke for marking friendly locations.

Discussion: It has been found that the smoke generated by the trip flare M49A1 is sufficient to make it an adequate substitute for standard smoke grenades. It can be used for marking friendly unit locations.

Observation: Flare, Surface, Trip M49A1 can be used as a substitute for the standard smoke grenades."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## d. Tunnel Teams.

"Item: Chemical Section Tunnel Team.

Discussion: Numerous spider holes, wells, and clay mines are found during division operations and are mistaken for tunnel systems. On several occasions, the Chemical Section Tunnel Team was called only to find out that they were not needed.

Observation: There is a requirement to have trained tunnel teams in the infantry battalions able to identify, exploit, deny, and/or destroy Viet Cong tunnels."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## e. B-52 Strikes.

"Item: Exploitation of B-52 strikes.

Discussion: In exploitation of B-52 strikes, the Brigade conducted airmobile assaults directly into the strike area within 20 minutes following the bombing. This method of exploiting strikes was effective and reduced the time required to get combat troops into the area.

Observation: By conducting rapid airmobile assaults directly into B-52 strike areas, the dazed enemy is given little time to reorganize or evacuate the area."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

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## f. Duration of Engagements.

"Item: Duration of engagements.

Discussion: The tactics of the enemy are to avoid major contact unless he is assured of an overwhelming advantage. Normally, this would include night combat, with poor visibility, and the absence of friendly artillery. Thus, success in obtaining enemy kills and enemy weapons is most often obtained in short meeting engagements.

Observation: Since the enemy is bent upon avoiding sustained combat, all efforts must be made to obtain maximum results from all meeting engagements. Commanders must advocate aggressive and immediate actions to preclude abrupt loss of contact and subsequent escape of the enemy."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

## g. Field Fortifications.

"Item: Field fortifications.

Discussion: "Digging in" becomes impractical in many areas during the monsoon season. Adequate protection requires that bunkers be constructed above the surface. When loading for a move, consideration must be given to space allocation for shoring and bunker construction materials. Additional vehicles may be necessary in order to transport the proper amount of materials that are needed to adequately fortify a position.

Observation: Procurement of fortification materials and the means of hauling them must be considered well in advance of operations, especially during the monsoon season."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## 2. The Enemy.

### a. Foraging Parties.

"Item: Enemy foraging parties.

Discussion: North Vietnamese Army forces harboring in an area send out small (2 - 3 men) foraging or rice-carrying parties for distances up to 5 or 6 thousand meters from their main base.

Observation: US forces have been successful in capturing prisoners from these small groups who, under interrogation, have provided extremely



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valuable information."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## b. Discipline.

"Item: Viet Cong discipline.

Discussion: In areas and instances where convoys have been ambushed, the convoy was preceded by an observer in an aircraft. The VC did not fire, but held his fire until vehicles were in the ambush.

Observation: All personnel must be trained to the fact that the VC is well disciplined in Guerrilla Warfare. A negative sighting does not necessarily mean that no VC exist in the area, and alertness must be maintained at all times."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 173d Airborne Brigade

## c. Decoys.

"Item: Establishing decoys against friendly pursuit elements.

Discussion: During late May 1966, elements of the 3d Brigade Task Force made contact with regimental-size NVA forces (66th and 33d). After sustaining heavy losses, the NVA units elected to break contact and exfiltrate to safe areas. Friendly forces, in an attempt to regain contact, began aggressive pursuit actions with company and platoon-size elements along suspected routes of enemy withdrawal. Over a period of three to five days, contact was made with small NVA elements (usually five or six men). These elements would open fire, causing friendly forces to deploy, and would then withdraw in a direction not compatible with originally intended routes of the friendly forces. The immediate reaction of friendly forces was to pursue these small enemy elements.

Observation: In retrospect, it is believed that these small enemy elements were, in fact, decoy forces positioned along major withdrawal routes. The mission of these forces was to await the arrival of main enemy elements in the area."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division



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## d. Mines.

"Item: VC mining of roads in the Brigade area of operations requires a means to counter this threat.

Discussion: In spite of patrolling and ambushes, the VC continue to mine roads in order to inflict losses on friendly units. It has been found that sweeping the roads using the AN/PRC-3 mine detector can effectively locate almost all mines, even those that have a low metal content. To be effective, the sweep must be conducted on foot. During Operations JOHN PAUL JONES and SEWARD, over 5000 km of road were swept, and approximately 50 mines were discovered. The Brigade suffered no casualties and lost but one vehicle to these mines.

Observation: Careful sweeping of roads for mines can effectively counter VC efforts to inflict losses by mining of roads."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Bde, 101st Airborne Division

## e. Intelligence Gathering.

"Item: Enemy observation of friendly units.

Discussion: Prisoners of war reported that they maintained contact with friendly forces through the use of reconnaissance units which reported location, direction of movement, and strength to higher headquarters. These reconnaissance units allegedly reported by both land line and radio to higher headquarters. Their "modus operandi" included established outposts/listening posts or of following units. The enemy use of these elements could explain in part how the enemy was able to attack friendly positions within thirty minutes to two hours after EENT with up to battalion-size units. These enemy reconnaissance patrols, plus some preparation of the battlefield and knowledge of the terrain, would have allowed the enemy to anticipate where friendly forces would stand down for the night. The enemy could then position himself for an attack.

Observation: US personnel should be apprised of this enemy tactic and the enemy's ability to capitalize on the information gained. Commanders should adopt procedures to counteract this enemy "modus operandi" such as the utilization of stay-behind forces to ambush routes used."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

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## f. Chieu Hoi Leaflets.

"Item: It is the policy of some VC units to have all their soldiers carry CHIEU HOI leaflets for use in the event of capture.

Discussion: Through interrogation of a VC captive who belonged to the D14 Bn, Mobile Force, TAY NINH Province, it was learned that each VC carries a CHIEU HOI leaflet. He is instructed that in case of capture, he is to present the document and claim that he was on his way to rally. The captive who furnished this information also used this tactic and only after several days of interrogation did he admit that he had no intentions of rallying prior to his capture.

Observation: A man who is captured automatically loses any rights he may have had under the CHIEU HOI Program. He is a VC and should be treated as a prisoner of war until proven otherwise."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## g. Chieu Hoi Intelligence Source.

"Item: The use of returnees (HOI CHANH) as an important source of intelligence.

Discussion: Recent experience has proven that one of the most profitable sources of intelligence is a returnee (HOI CHANH). Many times the returnees have led US and ARVN troops to secret tunnels where weapons and supplies have been located. The returnees also provide US/ARVN intelligence agencies with names of VC in the different villages. Immediate operations to exploit this intelligence with the returnee accompanying the unit has proven most successful.

Observation: One of the best sources of information concerning VC activities and supply routes has been the returnee."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## h. NVA AT Weapons will Penetrate Armor.

"Item: NVA AT weapons, RPG-2, RPG-7 and 75mm RR will penetrate the turret and hull of the M48A3 tank.

Discussion: The use of field expedients such as sandbags will decrease the effectiveness of the enemy HEAT weapons as well as absorb metal fragments from these weapons.

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Observation: A tank which had sandbags carried on the front slope was hit by an RPG-2 round but caused no damage to the vehicle or crew."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor

## i. Logistical Shortages.

"Item: Enemy logistical shortages.

Discussion: The enemy is consistently short of medical supplies. This shortage has caused an exceptionally high rate of malaria among the enemy forces. In addition, VC and guerrilla troops are often armed with only grenades indicating a shortage of weapons among these forces. Interrogation reports and discoveries of weapons caches lend credence to the possibility that ammunition stores are in demand. The enemy, whether VC or NVA forces, traditionally has no intent to engage in sustained combat.

Observation: The lack of supplies does not have as great an impact on enemy forces as might be believed since their tactics are not based on sustained engagements. Although their recuperative powers are inferior, compensation is offered by the fact that contact on well-established lines is nonexistent, offering the enemy ample time to refit and reorganize at his leisure. His tendency, whether by choice or otherwise, to carry a small basic load is a distinct vulnerability."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

## 3. Intelligence.

### a. Enemy Material Identification.

"Item: Intelligence reports containing enemy material identifications.

Discussion:

!(1) The VC have emplaced mines which were stencilled "US M1A1 Anti-Tank Mine, 1943". These mines have been reported, in certain instances, as being US mines. There has never been a US M1A1 Anti-Tank Mine, 1943.

(2) Subsequent investigation by this headquarters revealed that the mines were identical to "Communist China's Anti-Tank Mine Number 8" as described in "Mines and Booby Traps Used by the VC", published by ACofS, J2, MACV.

Observation: Intelligence personnel at all echelons should be sufficiently

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familiar with US as well as enemy material to permit them to frustrate such psychological warfare attempts as the falsely labeled "US M1A1 Anti-Tank Mine, 1943".

SOURCE: Headquarters, 937th Engineer Group (Combat)

## b. Documents Translation.

"Item: During periods when the brigade is engaged with enemy elements of company or larger size, the organic resources for document translation are not sufficient to handle the workload.

Discussion: During portions of Operations LINCOLN, GARFIELD, and initial stages of PAUL REVERE I, document translation teams were made available by I FFORCEV to support the brigade. The value of these teams was readily apparent. The organic MI Detachment was recently provided personnel to form a document team consisting of two Vietnamese linguists (US).

Observation: An increase in strength to further augment the brigade's document translation capability during those periods when enemy contact is light, cannot be justified. As long as this capability can be provided on "as needed" basis for brigades on separate missions, there will be no significant deficiency in the overall intelligence processing cycle."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## c. Special Forces Intelligence Network.

"Item: Units should make use of the Special Forces Intelligence network in their area of operation.

Discussion: A guerrilla war at best is an extensively fluid situation with action in many areas being conducted simultaneously. Timely intelligence from as many sources as possible aids in the evaluation of enemy intelligence. With Special Forces units operating extensively in the central highlands, coordination should be effected with these units to utilize their intelligence network and intimate knowledge of the area.

Observation: A great deal of timely information concerning the enemy and terrain has been obtained from the Special Forces Camps at Duc Co and Plei Me."



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SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor

## 4. Planning.

### a. Plan to Exploit the Enemy's Tendency to Return.

"Item: Stay-behind forces.

Discussion: Following the exploitation of B-52 strikes, battalions were extracted from the area leaving two reconnaissance platoons with seven days' rations as "stay-behind" forces. After three days, the platoons reported infiltration of enemy forces back into and through the area. The area was assaulted again by US forces utilizing the "stay-behind" forces to secure LZ's and block routes of exfiltration from the area.

Observation: A "stay-behind" force should be utilized to capitalize on the enemy's tendency to return to base areas after US forces have departed."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne

### b. Countermortar Plans.

"Item: Countermortar defenses.

Discussion: To adequately counter a mortar attack requires a plan that will achieve wide coverage. A small volume of fire on many locations is preferable to a large volume of fire on a small number of locations. This can best be achieved by laying artillery by platoons on preplanned targets. 4.2 inch and 81mm mortars can be profitably integrated into the early countermortar fires. In the event an attack is mounted, all tubes fire fuze VT at likely locations. As the situation develops and hostile positions are detected, the volume of fire in these areas is increased. Counterfire planning must also take into consideration possible enemy withdrawal routes.

Observation: Countermortar plans should provide for instant broad coverage in the initial phase of a hostile mortar attack."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

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## c. "Picket Stations".

"Item: Employment of "Picket Stations".

Discussion: The picket stations are small elements (fire team size) that are spaced throughout an operational area or along roads and trails to observe, direct fire, and interdict enemy LOC's. The key to the successful employment of the picket station is excellent communications.

Observation: The utilization of picket stations provides excellent results in observing VC movement and controlling villagers. It also enables an infantry battalion to cover a large area with observed fire and to prohibit VC efforts to move or escape."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## d. Positioning of Artillery.

"Item: Locations of helicopter landing pads in fire bases.

Discussion: During a recent period of heavy contact, resupply of 105mm artillery and 4.2 inch mortar ammunition was required at the battalion's fire base. Each time a resupply helicopter arrived, the indirect fire support weapons had to cease fire to permit a safe landing. The fire base was located in extremely dense bamboo and jungle vegetation.

Observation: It is imperative that foresight be given to the positioning of artillery and the 4.2 inch mortar platoon within a fire base to permit resupply of ammunition while the guns are in action. In addition, a resupply landing pad should be constructed immediately following occupancy. The landing pad must be positioned to permit utilization while the guns are firing."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## e. Airfield Traffic.

"Item: Reduced capability of airfields.

Discussion: On several occasions, especially during Operation EL PASO, the inability of a given airfield to handle required traffic created a critical situation.

A serious reduction of airfield capability was caused by:

(1) Airfield congestion due to helicopter traffic in and around the "airlift" origin or destination airfield. This, combined with minimum

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air traffic control at forward airfields, created safety hazards and "contact" between fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft.

(2) Weather. The onset of the monsoon season turned several airfields, fully suitable for heavy use during dry weather, into seas of mud, causing the airfields to be closed or at least reducing their capability below that necessary to sustain an operation.

Observation: When planning operations from forward airfields, consideration should be given to the capability of the airfield under all weather conditions and to the use of adequate air traffic control to reduce airfield congestion."

SOURCE: Headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam

## f. Aerial Artillery Observation.

"Item: Aircraft proximity to exploding projectiles.

Discussion: Due to restricted visibility during rain showers, aerial observers have to fly closer to the target to observe the bursts. In these cases, special consideration must be given to erratic fuze action and the possibility of fragments travelling greater distances than the normal bursting radius of the projectile.

Observation: Aerial observers must be aware of the possibility of being too close to the point of impact and advise pilots of the hazards involved."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## 5. Command and Control.

### Command and Control Helicopter.

"Item: The use of a command and control helicopter greatly assists the battalion commander in the control of his elements on road marches and during combat operations.

Discussion: The company commander is required to be on the ground where he can best influence the tactical action. During escort missions the aircraft can provide the ground commanders with timely information on route and traffic conditions, convoy discipline, and in maintaining direction of movement during combat operations. The



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command and control helicopter is used to keep the ground elements moving in the proper direction and assist in the selection of the best route of advance. During both type operations, the helicopter can be used to detect and give the ground commanders warning of enemy ambush positions.

Observation: This organization has experienced considerable success in directing ground commanders from the air. To facilitate air identification of vehicles, unit designation symbols have been painted on the vehicle tops or rear decks. The use of colored smoke grenades has proven helpful for locating elements by air observer in extremely dense areas."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor

## 6. Combat Techniques.

### a. Ground Reaction Force.

"Item: Ground Immediate Action Force.

Discussion: Frequently, when reconnaissance elements make contact, enemy forces exfiltrate the area as the airmobile immediate action force is being lifted into the area. When possible, a ground immediate action force should infiltrate an area on foot at the same time the reconnaissance elements are inserted into the area.

Observation: Infiltration of a sizeable ground force permits immediate exploitation of enemy contacts."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

### b. Location of Mortars.

"Item: Alternate firing positions for base camp mortars.

Discussion: The enemy knew in advance the location of the camp's mortars which enabled him to place accurate recoilless rifle fire on those positions. The results were that the 4.2 inch mortars were destroyed and several men killed or wounded.

Observation: Alternate firing positions for mortars should be prepared and the mortars should be frequently moved to different positions.



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Considerations should be given to the emplacement of dummy mortars in unoccupied positions."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 5th Special Forces Group

## c. C. S. Crystals.

"Item: Use of C. S. crystals.

Discussion: Due to the physical inability of units on the ground to cover all possible exits, infiltration routes, avenues of approach into objective area, as well as the ability to deny the enemy use of bunkers, tunnels, and known ambush sites, the brigade continues to develop new uses for C. S. crystals.

Observation: Through coordination with the Brigade Chemical Officer and the commanders on the ground, a method of seeding either by hand or air delivery was developed. The air delivery system, utilizing a metal container and GP (general purpose) bursters, has proven very effective."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 173d Airborne Brigade

## d. Tunnel Exploration Team.

"Item: Use of tunnel exploration and denial teams.

Discussion: The discovery and destruction or denial of VC tunnels presents a major problem to tactical commanders during the conduct of operations. The exploration of located tunnels has provided valuable intelligence.

Observation: Tunnel teams should be selected, trained, and equipped at company level to explore and destroy tunnels."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## e. Saturation Patrolling.

"Item: Saturation patrolling as a technique for finding and fixing the enemy.

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Discussion: Saturation patrolling is the most expeditious and effective means of finding and fixing the enemy and accomplishing a search and destroy mission in a specified AO. To implement this technique, an infantry battalion base of operation, with supporting artillery and an appropriate security/reaction force, is centrally located in an AO. Rifle companies may occupy different bases of operation from which platoon and squad patrols are dispatched. The positioning of the 4.2 inch mortar platoon in a company base of operation increases the patrol range as troops remain within range of indirect fire support. Platoons and squads may be airlifted into landing zones several thousand meters from the company or battalion base of operations to search assigned areas generally leading back to a base area or a pre-determined ambush site. A variation of this technique is to land separate elements of a company in several landing zones and have them converge on a common selected location while searching the area of operation enroute. When rifle companies are issued two or three days' rations, disclosure of friendly unit locations is eliminated through the absence of resupply helicopters. There are many variations of this technique, all involving rapid movement and helicopter support. Centrally locating the battalion base of operations enables an infantry battalion to search and clear an area of approximately 144 square miles without moving its base or displacing the supporting artillery battery.

Observation: Saturation patrolling has certain disadvantages which should be noted. First, heliborne assaults require extensive artillery and air preparations on selected landing zones. This, in conjunction with the presence of large numbers of helicopters, definitely alerts the enemy to the intended area of operations. Secondly, the enemy can be expected to leave the area, hide, or move into prepared and advantageous positions to fight on his own terms."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## f. Saturation Patrolling in Populated Areas.

"Item: Saturation patrolling can be effective in populated areas.

Discussion: Saturation patrolling can contribute as an effective measure to severely hinder VC activities in populated areas. VC main forces are forced to withdraw because of the difficulty in pinpointing the friendly main force location by infiltration. Populated areas regain a sense of security achieved from the ever present network of patrols about the area. Integration of ARVN forces in the saturation

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patrol plan instills in the people a loyalty to the GVN and generates increased participation by the people in the Revolutionary Development Program.

Observation: Saturation patrolling should be a prime consideration in establishing security in populated areas designated for Revolutionary Development Programs."

SOURCES: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division  
Headquarters, 173d Airborne Brigade

## 7. Police Operations.

### National Policemen on Field Operations.

"Item: Handling National Policemen during field operations.

Discussion: Field operations conducted by division units will invariably require National Policemen (NP). The proper utilization of these NP's will materially affect the degree of success a unit attains during field operations. The treatment they receive and the method by which they are used while attached to a unit will also be of major importance in maintaining the close relationship needed with the National Police authorities to carry on this joint effort. The following techniques should be followed when working with NP:

(1) Keep a NP, with interpreter, near the commander at all times to enable the commander to properly transmit his instructions to the NP.

(2) Keep NP escorted at all times with US troops. The NP have a tendency to wander and the unit may lose control of their activities.

(3) Maintain a roster of attached NP with their respective Police Stations indicated. This will assist in returning them to their proper duty station after the operation.

(4) Muster NP each morning and night for control and accountability.

(5) When the NP are interrogating, keep everyone away.

(6) Rice is their staple food. Conditions permitting, feed them rice with a C-Ration.



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(7) Give appropriate commendations to those NP whom you believe have performed beyond their normal duties.

Observation: Every little effort made to assist these NP will reflect directly or indirectly on the success of the operation and enhance our relationship with the NP authorities for the continued support which we must have."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## 8. Training.

### a. M-79 Grenade Launcher.

"Item: M-79 as indirect fire weapon.

Discussion: The M-79 Grenade Launcher has the capability of being employed as both a direct or an indirect fire weapon. The best method of utilization in a given situation is dictated by the terrain and vegetation. At present, the Army training program for this weapon does not include the indirect role; hence, the full capability of the weapon is not utilized. This additional role of the M-79 would in no way diminish the need for the 60mm and 81mm mortars.

Observation: Manuals and training directives are required that incorporate training guidance and techniques for use of the M-79 as an indirect fire weapon."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

### b. Grenade Training.

"Item: Grenade training from prone position.

Discussion: Personnel engaged in jungle combat must be instructed in the proper techniques of throwing the hand grenade, M-26, from the prone position while the individual's observation is restricted by the vegetation. Too often individuals have exposed themselves by rising to the kneeling position to throw a grenade.

Observation: Newly assigned personnel should receive instruction on

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how to throw grenades in dense vegetation from the prone position."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

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## Section II

### A SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED IN COMBAT SUPPORT OPERATIONS

#### 1. General Observations.

##### a. MIBARS Battalion Deployment.

"Item: Deployment of a MIBARS Battalion in a counterinsurgency operation.

Discussion: This battalion has a separate detachment which provides direct support to and is physically located in each of the four Vietnamese Tactical Corps areas. This is a departure from the normally accepted method of employment - that of stationing detachments with Air Force reconnaissance squadrons on widely separated airfields.

Observation: The current deployment and method of providing direct support to combat units engaged in stability operations is successful and appears tactically sound."

SOURCE: 1st Military Intelligence Battalion (ARS)

##### b. AVLB Support.

"Item: The M48 AVLB is used to extend the mobility of armor units.

Discussion: The AVLB has been used on numerous occasions to permit rapid crossing of obstacles. It extended the use of Route 19 to Duc Co for a period of a month after the ford at YA975291 became unusable. During Operation CIRCLE PINES, the AVLB was used to allow the battalion entry and exit of the area of operations. The M48 version of the AVLB is obsolete, too heavy, and subject to mechanical failure, but the system is an absolute requirement for armor units. This vehicle should be replaced by a lighter, more maneuverable, and more maintainable item.

Observation: The AVLB has proven to be one of this battalion's more valuable assets."

SOURCE: 1st Battalion, 69th Armor

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## 2. Army Aviation.

### a. Landing Zone Preparation.

"Item: Utilization of alternate methods to conduct the landing zone prestrike for helicopter assaults.

Discussion: A pattern in helicopter assaults has been established by preparing only one landing zone and by using the same TAC Air method of preparation each time. This not only pinpoints the exact location chosen for landing but provides the Viet Cong ample time to move toward the LZ and prepare to attack the assaulting forces. Whenever possible, the pattern should be varied. One means of variation is to prepare two or more logical LZ areas to provide deception and prevent pinpointing the proposed landing zone. The other means of variation, when the tactical situation permits, is the use of artillery or armed helicopters to prepare the landing zone. Artillery can be used with a heavy TOT type fire followed by an immediate landing of the troop ships with gunships providing the last protective fires. Armed helicopters can be used alone on occasion to strike just prior to the landing of the troop ships without previous preparation by TAC air or artillery.

In summary, stereotype procedures compromise operations. Deception, innovations, and unpredictable procedures are the keynotes to success.

Observation: The short, rapid, devastating LZ preparation by armed helicopters achieves maximum surprise and can be used as a variation of the standard TAC air preparation."

SOURCE: USARV Aviation Section

### b. Helicopter Damage.

"Item: Helicopter damage caused by radio antennas.

Discussion: Due to extensive use of helicopters in transporting troops and supplies, a continuing hazard exists for unknowledgeable individuals that approach a helicopter while the blade is turning. Individuals have been known to drive vehicles with radio antennas too close to the blades, resulting in severed antennas, damaged rotor blades, and flying debris dangerous to bystanders and helicopters. Back pack radios with long antennas constitute an equal hazard.

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Observation: Personnel involved in operations around aircraft must be indoctrinated on the possible hazards of rotating blades. Control of vehicular movement around airfields and landing zones must be rigidly enforced."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## c. Aircraft Ground Delays.

"Item: Ground handling equipment and personnel.

Discussion: Companies in this battalion have continued to experience delays and excessive ground time due to insufficient preparation of loads and in many instances cargo being of unknown weight. This is partially a result of inexperienced personnel being utilized along with inadequate equipment, i.e., fork lifts, pallets, and equipment to weigh loads. Inadequate communication and/or coordination between the organization requesting airlift support and the organization allocating the support has resulted in aircraft arriving at a destination to find personnel not aware that they were coming, and as a result not prepared to load the aircraft.

Observation: Failure to coordinate, inadequately-trained personnel, and lack of equipment continue to hinder maximum utilization of aircraft."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 222d Aviation Battalion

## d. Aviation Support.

"Item: Habitual association (aviation support).

Discussion: The more a supporting aviation unit knows about its supported unit, the better its capability of providing the best possible support. This battalion has frequently been required to support the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division with three assault helicopter companies. When this is the case, normally one assault helicopter company will provide support to a particular infantry battalion.

Observation: The concept of employing the same assault helicopter company with a particular infantry battalion is mutually advantageous and enhances effectiveness of aviation support."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 10th Combat Aviation Battalion



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## 3. Artillery Support.

### a. Airlift of Artillery.

"Item: Helilift of 105mm Howitzer Battery.

Discussion: Movement of 105mm howitzer batteries overland during the monsoon season is frequently impossible. Roads are impassable and suitable positions, of which there are few in number, are often accessible only by air. 105mm howitzer batteries must, therefore, develop proficiency in air movement. Each 105mm battery should have a complete set of rigging equipment. By fully preparing loads in advance, a lift can be completed with minimum delay, thereby, permitting much more efficient aircraft utilization. Training of personnel in pathfinder techniques will also promote a more efficient airlift operation.

Observation: All 105mm howitzer batteries should be equipped with rigging gear and pathfinder training should be given to selected personnel."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

### b. H&I Fires.

"Item: H&I Program.

Discussion: G2 Air conducted an extensive aerial reconnaissance over the area of operations during Operation FIREBALL I. As a consequence, much target information was gathered, thereby permitting the artillery unit to immediately initiate an effective H&I program. The success of this endeavor can be judged by the fact that an enemy mortar attack was not mounted on the artillery battery or supported unit even though both occupied VC dominated territory for three weeks.

Observation: Development of a sound H&I plan prior to occupation of strange territory may reduce the possibility of mortar attacks."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

### c. M110 Howitzer.

"Item: Repeated firing of the M110 8-inch self-propelled howitzer after the weapon has settled deeply into soft ground may result in damage to the weapon.

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Discussion: Although the M110 has proven its capability to operate over soft terrain, damage to weapons has resulted from their settling into the mud while firing. As long as the hull bottom remains clear of the ground, the lockout suspension system provides proper support. However, continuous firing in soft terrain causes the tracks and spade to sink in the suspension system with the eventual result of structural damage to the piece. This is probably the major cause of ruptured fuel tanks since damage to hydraulic lines, structural members, and drive shafts may be attributed to "bottoming".

Observation: Firing battery personnel must be continually alert for evidence of "bottoming" when firing in soft ground. When this condition is detected, the howitzer should be moved and relaid immediately."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## d. Artillery and Mortar Firing.

"Item: Technique employed for clearance and notification of artillery and mortar firing.

Discussion: Presently, firing units notify the brigade artillery liaison officer of all firing conducted within their area of operation. The brigade liaison officer then notifies the Air Force liaison officer and the Army Aviation representative who, in turn, notifies all aircraft. If the firing is to take place outside of the unit's area of operation, the brigade liaison officer will then determine if the coordinates are clear to fire. The information given by units to the brigade liaison officer consists of the coordinates of target, time firing will start and stop, nature of target, and maximum ordinate.

Observation: This method has proven reliable during our present operations."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## e. Interdiction Program.

"Item: Interdiction firing.

Discussion: This unit employs a scheduled saturation of a particular

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area for a period of time rather than firing random concentrations throughout the entire area. These fires are coordinated at brigade by the Fire Support Element and utilize all available artillery and air.

Observation: The method provides flexibility and control, and its results can be more accurately measured than those of the random method."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## f. Engaging a Target.

"Item: Procedures for engaging a target which is masked by a dense forest canopy.

Discussion: Forward observers must consider the height of the canopy when requesting a fire mission and request fuse delay when appropriate. An air observer firing a mission in a dense area can more easily identify the adjusting rounds if fuse VT is used. Fuse delay can then be fired for effect.

Observation: These procedures will help ensure accurate, rapid, and effective engagement of the target."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## g. Fire Missions.

"Item: Fire missions within 200 meters of friendly troops.

Discussion: When a fire mission is to be adjusted within 200 meters of friendly troops, all pieces that will fire for effect are fired in adjustment. In this manner, the observer will know the pattern of all the rounds and can adjust them accordingly. To request this, the observer includes the information in his initial fire request, i.e., "close 200 meters, south".

Observation: This alerts the firing battery to the proximity of fires to friendly troops and will ensure their safety."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division



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## h. Firing Chart.

"Item: Use of standard firing chart.

Discussion: The standard firing chart (scale 1:25,000) is not large enough to plot maximum range for the firing battery throughout 6400 mils. One method used is to orient the long axis of the chart in the direction where most of the firing is expected to occur. Then, in anticipation of firing at maximum range on the short axis, the grid lines on the firing chart are numbered for both 1:25,000 scale and 1:50,000 scale. This requires that the battery center be plotted for both scales. The use of color coding for each scale prevents confusion. In this manner, when it becomes necessary to engage a target at a range that cannot be plotted on the firing chart using a scale of 1:25,000, it can be plotted on the 1:50,000 scale.

Observation: This method has been found to be the most accurate and is current practice."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## 4. Engineer Support.

### Pioneer Engineer Work.

"Item: Pioneer engineer work.

Discussion: With the advent of the rainy season, it can be expected that considerable difficulty will be encountered with washed out bypasses, unpaved roads that will become very difficult to traverse, and other difficulties caused by the heavy rains in the soft alluvial soil in the area. While the engineers will repair major damage as quickly as possible, artillery units cannot be held up waiting for engineers when operational requirements call for immediate displacement. Artillery units must expect to do considerable engineer work on their own to get the guns through.

Observation: All artillery units should hold classes on basic pioneer engineer work to allow repair of culverts, bypasses, and other road work so that the roads can be made passable without engineer help."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 18th Artillery



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## Section III

### A SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED IN COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

#### 1. Medical Service.

##### a. Malaria Control.

"Item: Malaria control during periods of frequent contact.

Discussion: When a unit experiences frequent enemy contact, provisions of the malaria control program tend to receive less emphasis. The danger of malaria is additionally increased during these periods by the proximity of significant numbers of North Vietnamese Army personnel who suffer a high rate of malaria infection. This is especially true when units must operate for several days in areas of recently abandoned enemy base camps.

Observation: Malaria control measures must receive greater emphasis during periods of frequent enemy contact and when operating in areas of recently occupied enemy base camps."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

##### b. Venereal Disease/Medical.

"Item: Resistant strains of Gonococcus are being encountered now in the Phu Loi area.

Discussion: Gonorrhea is ordinarily quite susceptible to adequate doses of penicillin. However, girls frequenting the bars in the Phu Loi area have been receiving bimonthly injections of inadequate doses of penicillin. The result of this unfortunate practice has been the development of strains of Gonococcus which are resistant to even large doses of penicillin.

Observation: Venereal disease prevention is more important than ever and should include:

- a. Intensive troop education program.
- b. Strong emphasis on the use of prophylactics and personal

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hygiene following sexual contact.

c. Appropriate command measures such as "Off Limits" restrictions of selected establishments."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 11th Combat Aviation Battalion

## c. Triage/Surgical Operations.

"Item: Necessity of triage.

Discussion: The surgical staff learned the necessity of triage when 15 or more patients arrived at the admitting room at one time. The maximum load arriving at one time in Dustoffs has been 28 patients. Patients were triaged at the admitting area by the POD or SOD and tagged as IMMEDIATE, DELAYED, or MINIMAL. The latter two categories were taken to holding areas where assigned MC officers completed pre-operation evaluation. Immediate category remain in the triage area until adequately resuscitated, and venesections, airways, etc., are assured.

Observation: This patient load was handled more efficiently than smaller earlier loads due to increased physician experience and utilization of triage principles."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 58th Medical Battalion

## d. Superficial Wounds.

"Item: Superficial cuts and wounds should be given immediate treatment.

Discussion: Superficial cuts and wounds are being neglected, especially those associated with bamboo. Wounds of this type often lead to boils and skin infections which require treatment with antibiotics.

Observation: Personnel must be made aware of the seriousness involved in neglecting these types of wounds and that immediate first aid measures must be taken when personnel receive a cut or wound."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division



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## e. Helicopter Evacuation.

"Item: Standby dustoff air ambulances.

Discussion: As operations have penetrated deeper into northern provinces, the flying distance from forward areas to medical facilities has increased. This requires more time for dustoff aircraft to make the circuit from their base and back to the medical facility.

Observation: Dustoff aircraft have been centrally located in or near the area of operations. This has reduced the distance of the first leg and gets the casualty to a medical facility much sooner."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## 2. Logistics.

### a. General Observations.

#### (1) Storage Space.

"Item: Storage space in Vietnam is critically short.

Discussion: There is always the problem of what to do with materials received which will not be used for an indefinite period of time. CONEX containers have been a practical solution, but CONEX containers are not built with vents. The humid climate in Southeast Asia comes into play here. CONEX containers hold moisture within and contents are often ruined by mildew and rot. Tentage suffers particularly when stored rolled up and secured in a CONEX container.

Observation: It seems better to construct a floor and a roof over a storage area and leave stored equipment exposed so that some ventilation will keep rot and mildew to a minimum. Before storing any material in a closed area, care should be taken to insure that everything is dry before storage. Such action eliminates inherent moisture which, when vaporized by heat, spreads to other items stored in the same container."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Military Intelligence Battalion (ARS)

#### (2) Inadequate Electrical Generating Equipment.

"Item: Electrical generators for medical units deploying to this command

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are inadequate.

Discussion: Both the 18th Surgical Hospital and the 85th Evacuation Hospital were sent to this command with inadequate electrical generating equipment. The 18th Surgical Hospital is authorized three 15KW generators by TOE to operate its complex. The 85th Evacuation Hospital, in a similar manner, is authorized insufficient generators by TOE. Numerous items of electrical equipment, including air conditioners, fluorescent lights, refrigerators, water pumps, and X-ray equipment require a constant, reliable source of electric power.

Observation: A minimum of two 100KW generators for Surgical Hospitals and four 100KW generators for Evacuation Hospitals deploying to USARV should be provided these units prior to their deployment from CONUS."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 55th Medical Group

(3) Incoming Aviation Units.

"Item: Inadequate preparation in CONUS.

Discussion: Aviation and aircraft maintenance units arrive in theater ill-equipped for their mission. Units, especially those hastily organized prior to PCS, arrive with critical shortages of mission equipment, notably aircraft special tools, hardware kits, and repair parts stockage. Shortages detract from mission capabilities and cause considerable delay before the unit reaches full operational effectiveness. Shortages must be drawn from available assets and cause a drain on theater resources. Support packages under DA Project Codes, formulated and assembled by USAAVCOM, assist to some degree. Support packages, however, do not always have a timely arrival, nor are they always complete and adequate. In many cases, USAAVCOM was not advised of the planned mission of the unit, particularly that of support units; therefore, the support package did not coincide with mission assignments. Moreover, support packages do not contain armament support materials, in that this falls under the purview of other commodity commands.

Observation: Alerted aviation and aircraft maintenance units must be fully equipped with aircraft special tools, hardware kits, and repair parts prior to departure from CONUS."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 14th Transportation Battalion (AM&S) (ES)

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## (4) Road Construction.

"Item: Pioneer Road Construction.

Discussion: One lane road construction often results in long backing distances for dump trucks. Too few and inadequate turn around locations drastically slow down fill operations.

Observation: Construct frequent turn arounds for construction equipment and develop them into turn outs as the one lane road opens to traffic."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 39th Engineer Battalion

## (5) Ammunition.

"Item: Safety in handling of ammunition.

Discussion: Upon the arrival of the 191st Ordnance Battalion (Ammo), it was noted by the staff that many unsafe practices were being condoned in ammunition handling operations at Cam Ranh Bay. Immediate action was taken to emphasize safe handling procedures and to enforce no-smoking regulations. Many transportation handlers (both Army and contractor) seemed unaware of the hazards involved in ammunition handling. Much effort is still required to educate all concerned in the safe handling of ammunition.

Observation: Unit commanders of both ordnance and transportation units handling ammunition must constantly stress the importance of safety in handling ammunition. This is particularly true with respect to individual replacements. Contractors must be cautioned in the safe handling of ammunition on board ship and in loading operations."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 191st Ordnance Battalion

## (6) CONEX Containers.

"Item: Multiple use of CONEX containers.

Discussion: Due to extreme heat and high humidity in RVN, many items of equipment deteriorate rapidly and must be stored in tightly constructed containers. Also, secure areas for storage of weapons, ammunition, and other accountable items are scarce.



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"Item: Stretching bracket for pierced steel planking.

Discussion: Brackets used for stretching PSP which only hook into two or three holes in a PSP panel do not distribute stretching load adequately and often the result is severe deformation of panels.

Observation: An excellent stretching bracket may be made by welding a hook to a half panel of PSP. The half panel is then inserted into the PSP to be stretched, and the load is distributed across the length of the panel."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 84th Engineer Battalion (Construction)

"Item: Alignment of PSP runways.

Discussion: The alignment of long strips of PSP is difficult to maintain during the laying operation and during stretching.

Observation: After laying the complete strip of PSP, alignment imperfections are very noticeable to the naked eye and may be straightened by pulling from the sides of the strip with a dozer winch. Truck-mounted winches of smaller capacity will not satisfactorily serve due to the heavy weight of the PSP."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 84th Engineer Battalion (Construction)

## (5) Land Mine Operations.

"Item: Minesweeps in hostile areas.

Discussion: Occasionally, a requirement exists to provide minesweep teams for a specific road opening. Security for the minesweep team is usually quite adequate as such sweeps are made through extremely hostile areas. It has been found that the VC have pre-chambered sections of the road, leaving the chambers empty, placing a board or other nonmetallic substances over the top, and backfilling to road level to disguise its existence. The minesweep team often passes over these empty chambers on their sweep up the road. After the convoy has passed, the VC return, quickly place a mine device in the chamber and backfill again. Several vehicles returning as little as three hours later have been destroyed in this manner.

Observation: Sweeping the road on the return trip has proven most essential to deter mining after a convoy or task force has passed. In addition, the placing of security elements along the road or combinations of strong points and patrolling also has eliminated this type of mining

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incident. Helicopter observation of the road at low level is also a deterrent against such activity."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 35th Engineer Battalion.

"Item: Mine sweeping Demo Teams assigned to infantry units.

Discussion: When travelling with the infantry the weight of supplies and equipment became a very important consideration. Mine detectors were carried on the individual's back in a sandbag rather than in the heavier plastic case. The burlap offered enough protection for the detector and was an easy method of securing the instrument. Each team carried no more than 10 to 15 pounds of explosives at one time because of the ready availability of resupply by helicopter.

Observation: Proper planning of equipment and demolitions to achieve minimum essential requirements can substantially increase the efficiency and mobility of a mine clearing team."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 27th Engineer Battalion (Construction)

## c. Maintenance.

### (1) Unauthorized aircraft armament modification:

"Item: Standardization of armament subsystems.

Discussion: "Jury-rigs" present a problem in supportability and safety to supporting units. Jury-rigs of a given armament system will vary, even within a given unit. Aviation units are reluctant to allow the installation of a subsystem, such as the XM-16, as required by standard procedures. Systems properly installed by DS units are modified into jury-rigs by the users. The user declares that a given system does not meet his requirements or desires and so applies his own modifications or change to a system.

### Observation:

(a) The theater command must place an increased emphasis on the policy on unauthorized modifications.

(b) The theater should conduct a survey to determine requirements and desires of the user regarding aircraft armament configuration. Direct

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liaison with CDC elements in Vietnam may expedite necessary studies of this problem.

(c) Armament elements of this battalion are submitting EIR's and advising and assisting the users to submit EIR's of their own."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 14th Transportation Battalion (AM&S) (GS)

## (2) Aircraft Maintenance.

"Item: CH-47A nonprovisioned structural repair parts acquisition methods.

Discussion: Structural damage to CH-47 helicopters in RVN created problems in the supply system since there was no method of identification of the damaged structural parts. A simple procedure using a book of exploded diagrams and instructions to color the damaged areas has provided the manufacturer and the National Inventory Control Point with a fast and easy identification method.

Observation: Use of this procedure will reduce the length of time CH-47A's are deadlined for parts."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 34th General Support Group

## (3) Rapid Refueling of Helicopters.

"Item: Rapid refueling of helicopters.

Discussion: A rapid refueling capability for helicopters supporting tactical operations is mandatory. A flight of 16 helicopters should be able to land and be refueled simultaneously without shutting down the engines. There are several pumping systems with filter units that can be rigged to meet this requirement. The MINIPORT SERVICING SYSTEM with four outlets and the KENCO pump (100 gal per minute) with two outlets are favored. Of these two systems, the KENCO system is considered more satisfactory for highly mobile operations in that this system can be transported by UH-1 helicopter. Neither of these items have been available in sufficient quantity to satisfy total needs. This shortage has caused considerable difficulty in that it has been necessary to shift available assets from one unit to another to support operations.

Observation: Incoming units that will be involved in conducting airmobile operations should make every effort to obtain these items in sufficient quantity prior to departing CONUS."

SOURCE: Headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam



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## (4) Generator Failure.

"Item: Frequently generators fail electrically.

Discussion: Continuous operation, extreme climate, and dust contribute to a high generator deadline rate.

Observation: Generators should be connected to a 3-phase operation whenever possible. This results in smoother operation, lower internal heating, and an apparent significant reduction in generator failures."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 54th Signal Battalion (Corps)

## (5) Field Maintenance.

"Item: Field expedient maintenance of panoramic telescopes.

Discussion: During the monsoon season a maintenance problem developed on the panoramic telescopes which was caused by moisture condensing on the lenses. Sealer compound was not available at ordnance to make an airtight seal; so, a field expedient was devised. This consisted of a metal fuse box in which wires were strung and arranged in such a manner that a panoramic telescope could be suspended in the middle. The fuse box was then placed across a small trench in which a fire was started. After about thirty to forty minutes, this "hot box" effectively dried the lenses.

Observation: This is strictly a field expedient method, but it will keep the telescope from becoming unserviceable."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## (6) Field Expedient Rifle Cleaning Rod.

"Item: Replacement cleaning rods for the M-16 have been extremely difficult to obtain. A satisfactory field expedient replacement is a one meter length of strong, thin wire (the wire from an electric blasting cap is suitable). The cleaning patch is secured in the center of the wire by one or two turns, and the wire threaded through the barrel. Sticks can then be attached to each end of the wire as handgrips for drawing the patch back and forth. The wire is easy to carry when not in use.

Observation: A one-meter length of strong, thin wire is a satisfactory substitute for an M-16 rifle cleaning rod. Electric blasting cap wire is readily available and is recommended."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

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## (7) Ammunition Prefire Inspection.

"Item: Prefire inspection of 175mm ammunition.

Discussion: A second 175mm gun tube was recently damaged when the breech mechanism was blown off during a fire mission. Since this accident may have been caused by any one of several malfunctions, and to assist the commanders of 175mm gun units from the ammunition point of view in preventing a recurrence of such an incident, a prefire check or inspection of 175mm gun ammunition is necessary.

Observation: Zone 3 charges must be closely examined for broken or loose igniter tube assemblies at the firing site prior to firing. Rounds with broken igniter tubes will be returned to supporting ASP."

SOURCE: Headquarters, US Army Vietnam, G4

### d. Supply.

#### (1) Aircraft Supply.

"Item: Retrograde of aircraft reparable.

Discussion: The critical worldwide shortage of aircraft components requires maximum attention to be devoted to the prompt return of all reparable items to designated repair facilities in-country or to CONUS for rebuild or overhaul. This problem is compounded in Vietnam by the denied use of MSR's, resulting in complete dependence on air evacuation. Ton-nages involved are approximately 400 tons per month, which competes with incoming cargo or with tactical air requirements for movement in-country.

Observation: Most units responsible for evacuation of reparable lack qualified packing and crating personnel and sufficient materials to handle reparable of this volume efficiently. Force structures for Field Armies utilizing extensive numbers of Army aircraft should include recovery and classification companies capable of fielding teams to prepare reparable for shipment into a central collection point for evacuation."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 34th General Support Group

#### (2) Aircraft Parts.

"Item: Misshipment or loss of aircraft parts.

Discussion: Some shipments of aircraft parts and components have been

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marked for and/or delivered to agencies not involved in aircraft supply. Delay or temporary loss of the components is the result.

Observation: To improve control and distribution, two actions would be beneficial:

a. Supply agencies must be notified that requisitions for aircraft supplies should not be accepted from unauthorized agencies.

b. Standardized shipping markings should be used by supporting supply agencies to preclude loss or misshipment of the item upon arrival at the port or airfield."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 58th Transportation Battalion

## (3) Generators.

"Item: The 4.2 KW generator authorized as a component of the Track Command Post M-577 is used extensively during combat operations in Vietnam.

Discussion: The repair parts requirement for the 4.2 KW generator was based on demand data generated outside RVN. For the past five months, the generators for the operations and intelligence vehicles have operated an average of eight hours a day. Repair parts, particularly replacement engines, are not available in the supply system at this time.

Observation: Support agencies must stock repair parts for this piece of equipment based on demand data generated by like units in country."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

## (4) Wiring.

"Item: Non-standard electrical wiring.

Discussion: American electrical supplies are quite difficult to obtain and local purchase items are frequently used as a substitute. Electrical wire purchased from the local sources is neither standard nor uniform in quality. The quality is generally lower than American procured electrical supplies. Because of this many problems arose in using locally purchased wire for circuits designed for standard American wire.

Observation: Locally procured supplies should be tested and rated before installation to determine if they are acceptable for use."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 46th Engineer Battalion (Construction)



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## 3. Signal Communications.

### a. Radio Equipment Density.

"Item: Radio equipment density.

Discussion: Radio is the primary means of communications during combat operations in Vietnam. Communications for command and control, logistics support, and supporting arms (air, artillery, and naval gunfire) are in most instances over radio channels. As a result, radio equipment has been issued to units based on needs rather than TOE's to assure vital communication links. However, a concurrent increase in personnel has not occurred. Transfer within a unit of other resources, such as wire, communications center, switchboard, and radio relay personnel would be appropriate. Units are presently providing for their base camp communications using these assets.

Observation: Until base camp operations are taken over by programmed units and facilities, tactical units must accept the increased equipment capability and provide for a similar capability in the quality of their assigned personnel. Specifically, training in operation and care of radio equipment must be continuous."

SOURCE: Headquarters, US Army Vietnam - Communications-Electronics

### b. Storage of Dry Cell Batteries and Photographic Supplies.

"Item: Dry cell batteries and photographic supplies.

Discussion: Dry cell batteries and photographic supplies deteriorate rapidly in a tropical climate and should not be exposed to heat, humidity, rain, and temperature changes.

Observation: Dry cell batteries and photographic supplies should be stored in a cool dry place. Since this is not practical at the present time, adequate inside storage has been provided for these items protecting them from rain and direct heat from the sun."

SOURCE: Cam Ranh Bay Depot

### c. Electronic Test Equipment.

"Item: Repair of electronic test equipment.

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Discussion: Establishing a USARV command-wide calibration program resulted in a heavy influx of test equipment for maintenance. Equipment in the field contained faults which were not apparent to using personnel. Increased equipment maintenance backlogs approached unacceptable levels.

Observation: An additional test repair capability is being obtained through contract with a civilian electronics firm to augment military capabilities."

SOURCE: Headquarters, US Army Vietnam, G4

## d. Signal Items Subject to Pilferage.

"Item: Many signal items such as survival radios, cameras, film, and magnetic recording tape are subject to loss due to pilferage.

Discussion: "Nice to have" items like those indicated above are subject to an exceptionally high rate of loss due to pilferage and should be stored in a secure area.

Observation: These items are now stored in a security warehouse and the rate of loss has decreased sharply. Losses of these items can now be traced to the receiving area, to the men who move the items to the security warehouse, and to the local nationals employed by the depot. Closer supervision of the enlisted men and a shakedown of all local nationals would prevent most pilferage from occurring at this time."

SOURCE: Cam Ranh Bay Depot.

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## Section IV

### A SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

#### GENERAL

##### 1. Base Camps.

###### a. Airstrip.

"Item: Resurfacing of Khe Sanh Airstrip with Aluminum Planking.

Discussion: The airstrip at Khe Sanh was a badly deteriorated pierced steel planking (PSP) with an intended C-130 capability. The PSP had so deteriorated that it presented hazardous obstacles to aircraft. A Seabee team, working around the clock, removed the old PSP and resurfaced the strip with noncorroding aluminum sheet planking in 5 days. Without the improvement of the airstrip, the large increase in air traffic necessary to sustain the increased troop strength in the area would not have been possible.

Observation: The new aluminum planking now available for surfacing airstrips can be laid rapidly by skilled engineers, and the aluminum planking has an all weather capability and a long durability. Every effort should be made to surface Special Forces airstrips with aluminum planking."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 5th Special Forces Group

###### b. Wire Communication.

"Item: Wire communications.

Discussion: Telephones are needed initially for command and perimeter communications. Units arriving in-country seem to have an extreme shortage of wire equipment.

Observation: Units should bring with them as Red TAT sufficient telephones, switchboards, and wire to establish these initial communications."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 196th Infantry Brigade

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## c. Base Construction.

"Item: Fabrication of sway bracing for prefabricated steel buildings.

Discussion: Shortage of sway bracing for prefabricated steel buildings has occurred due to loss in shipment and/or damage.

Observation: Sway braces may be fabricated by welding turnbuckles to lengths of steel reinforcing bar. Wire rope with cable clamps may be used in lieu of reinforcing bar."

"Item: Building roof vents.

Discussion: Buildings were designed and constructed during the dry season. Roof vents were provided to aid in circulation of air. With the advent of the rainy season, it was found that in many instances the wind carried the rain almost horizontally. Insufficient overhang had been provided and the rain literally poured through the vents. A new design which provides approximately 2 feet overhang with a 7-inch clearance has been found to be effective. Roof and rafter pitch is 6: 12.

Observation: Roof vents are necessary, but proper allowances must be made for the monsoon rains."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 159th Engineer Group (Construction)

## 2. Training.

### a. Officer Training.

"Item: Aircraft Materiel Officers.

Discussion: Experience has shown that a requirement exists for officers who are equally well qualified in both Aircraft Maintenance and Supply to function as commanders, staff officers, and managers. The heavy supply mission placed on direct support maintenance companies, the staff supervision required at battalion level and above, and commodity managers at an inventory control point requires training and/or experience in both fields. A career development program which will develop specialized Logistics Officers in aircraft materiel would satisfy requirements at the unit level and provide a broad base upon which selected officers could be drawn for higher command, staff, USAAVCOM positions, and as Project Managers for Aviation systems.

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Observation: A need exists for specialized officers in Aircraft Materiel Management to occupy positions of responsibility in command, staff, and management."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 58th Transportation Battalion (AM&S)

## b. Training Programs for Units Scheduled to Deploy.

"Item: Training programs of units scheduled for deployment to a combat area during a hasty buildup should be accelerated to meet operational requirements.

Discussion: Rapid buildup of supplies and equipment required for support of combat operations is dependent upon having adequate troop units available for the handling of these items. With exception of that training which must be given to technical supervisors, training of individuals for supply handling functions can be accelerated in CONUS with additional training provided in area of deployment by "on the job training". This will permit earlier deployment of these units commensurate with operational requirements.

Observation: Future activation and organization of units for deployment to a theater of combat operations should provide for a program of accelerated training in CONUS when "on the job training" can be provided in the area to which the unit is to be deployed."

SOURCE: Cam Ranh Bay Depot

## c. Training of Personnel in MILSTAMP/MILSTRIP Procedures.

"Item: Neither local national nor U. S. military cargo checkers have a basic understanding of the MILSTAMP/MILSTRIP procedures.

Discussion: Cargo shipped from the pier is frequently misrouted and/or ~~misplaced~~ due to lack of knowledge of the fundamentals of the MILSTAMP/MILSTRIP regulations (e.g., construction of TCN's) on the part of either local national or U. S. military cargo checkers. This doubles the work placed on operations personnel who have the requisite knowledge.

Observation: That prior to being assigned duties as a cargo checker, individuals be required to attend formal instruction on MILSTAMP/MILSTRIP



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procedures in order to insure their proficiency and eliminate faulty TCMD's and misrouting of cargo."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 4th Transportation Command

## d. AAMTAP Instructors.

"Item: Army Aircraft Mobile Technical Assistance Program (AAMTAP)."

### Discussion:

(1) With the large increase in the number of Army aircraft, the quality and experience level of aircraft mechanics has decreased. The AAMTAP school is designed to update and increase the knowledge level of personnel that already have a working knowledge of the basic aircraft or specific items, e.g., engines.

(2) Requests have been submitted as to the need of AAMTAP in RVN, e.g., double courses are needed now in the UH-1 airframe; CH-47 airframe; T-53 gas turbine engine; and the T-55 gas turbine engine.

(3) Facilities to accommodate this increase in AAMTAP are available now.

Observation: AAMTAP instruction is filling a vital role in aircraft maintenance in RVN. Higher headquarters must realize AAMTAP's importance, and place command emphasis to expedite the increase of AAMTAP instructors."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 34th General Support Group

## e. Intelligence Principles.

"Item: Intelligence principles as described in manuals and as taught in schools are valid in bilateral operations, but modifications are necessary."

Discussion: It has been found that the general principles expounded in manuals and at the Intelligence School are as valid here in Vietnam as elsewhere. However, there is a tendency to sidestep them in bilateral operations for the sake of expediency. Because of the unique situation called bilaterals, there is not a great deal of background experience

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that can train people in the eccentricities and demands of the work in bilateral operations.

Observation: If it is not being done now, courses in the Intelligence School should be modified, to the extent practicable, to include examples of the current operational problems faced here in Vietnam working with counterpart personnel and organizations."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Military Intelligence Battalion (ARS)

## f. Intelligence Training.

"Item: There is a necessity in intelligence operations to provide adequate training of Vietnamese counterparts.

Discussion: Much talk is made concerning the need for rapport with Vietnamese counterparts. The need is great, granted, but there is an equal need to train and inform these people in correct and proper intelligence operational procedures. All the rapport in the world is worthless unless valuable results are obtained. In this Branch it has been seen that the Vietnamese are most reluctant to part with information which is necessary for proper intelligence planning and utilization of resources for which the United States provides funds. Counterparts must be made to realize how important this information is and that it needs to be obtained.

Observation: It is felt that the winning of rapport with counterpart personnel should not be used as a screen for inefficiency and laziness. All effort should be made to educate these people in the requirement for following basic intelligence procedures and habits."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Military Intelligence Battalion (ARS)

## 3. Civil Affairs/Civic Action.

### a. Civic Action Projects.

"Item: Civic action projects.

Discussion: There must be close coordination among all units in the area concerning the civic action program.

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(1) Some worthwhile projects were receiving aid from many military units while other equally worthwhile projects were receiving little or no aid.

(2) When a large cash gift is donated to local leaders, many times it is misused. Example: \$800.00 was given to a priest in a local orphanage where food and clothing were greatly needed. The priest built a beautiful \$800.00 chapel with the gift.

## Observation:

(1) All civic action projects in a given district require coordination with the senior advisor to the District Chief level.

(2) When a large sum of money is presented to a local leader, the disbursement of said money should be closely supervised by the Civic Action Officer concerned."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 159th Engineer Group (Construction)

## b. Chieu Hoi Program.

"Item: CHIEU HOI Enticement.

Discussion: Psywar leaflets to date concerning CHIEU HOI's consist mainly of written enticements which the average VC cannot read, or cartoons which he does not accept. The interrogation of CHIEU HOI's show a high illiteracy rate, and indicates that several of the major reasons for rallying consist of the following:

(1) Constant hardships such as living in trenches and constantly on the move.

(2) Constant fear of artillery fire and air strikes.

(3) Constant hard work and lack of compensation.

(4) Loneliness, separation from their families.

(5) Lack of, or scarcity of food.

(6) False promises by the VC cadres regarding compensations and rewards.

Utilizing these reasons, an approach is being made to have photographs of actual scenes of CHIEU HOI's and even ARVN families in a comfortable home with ample food and clothing, happy children, and a



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close knit happy family depicted in leaflet form. Each photograph would include a caption in simple Vietnamese which they can understand.

Observation: Leaflets of this type would have a greater psychological impact on the average VC as he will be able to better understand the intended message, thereby increasing the possibilities of his rallying."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## c. Civil Affairs Planning.

"Item: Preparing and planning CA projects in pacified areas.

Discussion: One important phase of any pacification plan is the development of CA projects. Prior to initiating and completing a project, coordination must be effected with sub-sector officials and their advisors. Coordination informs these officials of projects being developed in their area and will preclude any duplication of effort.

Observation: Planning of CA projects (all of which are of the self-help variety) must include utilization of village help. Coordination with village officials will assist in enlisting village help. A project becomes meaningless, no matter how impressive or important it may be, unless the villagers associate themselves with it by actual participation."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

## d. Combined ARVN - US Pacification Operations.

"Item: Combined ARVN - US pacification operations are necessary and workable.

Discussion: To win the cooperation of the people in outlying areas, security against VC terrorism is essential. The people must see stability and the capability of the GVN to maintain peaceful and improving conditions. When a mutual understanding of the goals and the characteristics of ARVN and US personnel exists, combined pacification operations will work. Patience and willingness to cooperate are necessary components that both sides must possess. Pacification operations conducted as a combined ARVN - US effort have been productive and these factors are the basic reasons for

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the definite continued success.

Observation: Combined ARVN - US pacification operations should be employed against the VC operating in the populated outlying areas. Understanding of the goals and a mutual willingness for cooperation and patience must be present.

SOURCE: Headquarters, I Field Force Vietnam

## e. Use of Leaflets.

"Item: Leaflets utilized for possible informant recruitment.

Discussion: Several reward type leaflets have been published and distributed which instruct any person with information concerning the VC to write this information on the backside of the leaflet and mail it to Box 12 at CU CHI, the District Headquarters. The leaflet has one corner ticked which he is instructed to tear off and retain as a receipt. The leaflet and the corner are both stamped with the same number. He is instructed to report at a later date with his receipt to the District Office to ascertain if his information has been of intelligence value.

Observation: This provides any Vietnamese with the anonymity he needs and desires while reporting information about VC activities, and offers an opportunity to recruit informants either permanently or temporarily through this screening system."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## 4. Personnel and Administration.

### a. Assignment of medical personnel.

"Item: Assignment of medical personnel to alerted units.

Discussion: Medical personnel assigned to this unit, in the most part, joined the unit after POM training, thus were not thoroughly familiar with the unit, its capabilities, and organization.

Observation: Personnel fill should be made sufficiently in advance for personnel to be with the unit for POM training."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division

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## b. Partially Qualified Aviation Personnel.

"Item: Lack of experience of newly arrived, school-trained avionics personnel.

Discussion: Newly arrived, school-trained avionics personnel with no field experience lack the qualifications to perform maintenance on a general support level, regardless of MOS.

Observation: It has proved beneficial to afford these personnel a period of additional training. A rotation system has been established allowing personnel to be rotated to Nha Trang for training on the bench on three major radio systems, i.e., AN/ARC-102, AN/ARC-54 and AN/ARC-51BX. This training is conducted by the Collins technical representatives for approximately a ten-day period."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 14th Transportation Battalion (AM&S)(GS)

## c. ARVN Interpreters.

"Item: Interpreters.

Discussion: There are insufficient ARVN interpreters. Although the Brigade has requested 23 ARVN interpreters, not more than 15 were present for duty during the quarter. In order to supplement military interpreters, the Brigade has hired civilians through the permanent hire system. To date, nine civilian interpreters have been hired to be used in nonhazardous positions. Military interpreters formerly occupying these positions have been reassigned to combat elements.

Observation: Hiring of civilian interpreters is an effective means of augmenting ARVN interpreters."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

## d. Control of Indigenous Personnel.

"Item: Approximately 1,000 indigenous laborers are employed daily at the division base camp which presents an ideal vehicle to the VC for infiltration of espionage agents and saboteurs inside the division perimeter. This local labor pool is constantly screened by the CI Section,



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25th MI Det as part of Operation KLEEN, to detect any espionage or sabotage threat.

Discussion: The known and suspected VC elements, their families, and their sympathizers comprise a substantial segment of the civilian population in the area contiguous to the division base. The following actions are currently in effect to minimize the risks inherent in such a labor force.

(1) A daily search and shakedown of all laborers prior to entering or leaving the base, with close supervision by noncommissioned US personnel to prevent the introduction or removal of contraband, espionage, or sabotage devices. Women are hired in order to more effectively search women laborers.

(2) A continual screening of ID Cards, with periodic assistance by the National Police to detect bearers of false ID Cards in the division labor force.

(3) A continual collection and photocopying during the workday of laborer's ID Cards provides a growing base of personnel data for comparison with current black and grey list holdings and for counterintelligence investigation.

(4) Informants have been, and are being, developed at various levels within and outside the base camp to report on suspects within the labor force.

Observation: Current search procedures reduce VC espionage potential to a minimum; the ID Card checks hamper attempts to gain access with false documentation; developed informants and other counterintelligence measures have resulted in the detection and apprehension of six self confessed VC espionage agents and the elimination of other known or suspected VC found in the division labor force."

SOURCE: Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division

## 5. Military Police Operations.

"Item: Water Transportation.

Discussion: Military police units performing the mission of port and vessel security are equipped with boats from other branches of service that do not meet the needs of the mission assigned, due to limitations

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in their size and speed.

Observation: Units deploying for this type of assignment require a boat designed to fit the mission.

SOURCE: 92d Military Police Battalion

"Item: Starlight Scopes.

Discussion: The effectiveness of Starlight Scopes in port security operations is reduced by excessive artificial lighting created by port operations or ships anchored in the harbor.

Observation: Starlight Scopes do not lend themselves to effective utilization in areas with excessive artificial lighting.

SOURCE: 92d Military Police Battalion

"Item: Air Control of Convoy Escort Vehicles.

Discussion: During the control of convoy vehicles from the air, difficulties were encountered in effectively identifying military police armored escort vehicles and directing their location within the convoy while enroute or at halts.

Observation: The use of aerial identification panel markers with pre-planned color and position codes on MP convoy escort vehicles greatly improves air control effectiveness.

SOURCE: 720th Military Police Battalion

"Item: Armor Plating Weight Effects.

Discussion: The use of the armor kit on the  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton truck, M151, presents weight overload problems on the suspension system.

Observation: Units requisitioning armor kits should also requisition auxiliary overload spring kits, FSN 2510-973-2506, to avoid rapid and premature wear on the standard suspension system."

SOURCE: 504th Military Police Battalion

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